A GHOST IN AUGUST

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JUNE 2022

1862 SKETCH BY NEIL DAMGAARD

MANY THANKS TO LINDA HOLLIS FOR STYLISTIC EDITING

I became conscious—I guess that would be awakened--sitting in the middle of a road, a dirt road. It was a reddish, orangish rubble-strewn roadbed with ruts here and there, lengthwise into the road's two directions. Stuff was scattered about, "flotsam and jetsam"; the phrase came into my head, although the junk around was not nautical—what a strange term. Worn, torn apart haversacks, pieces of blankets, a couple of broken wagon wheels, random straps of leather, also torn. There were hats (a few looked new even), belts and even a few broken muskets.

A marching troop clearly had been through here, recently—but I could not tell in what direction they had gone. I squinted, looked around, and thought to myself, "Maybe I had better get out of the road." So I got myself up and moved to the side. I could see a small barn and, sticking up below the rise on which I stood, a small church steeple. I could see no animals although the barn headquartered an obvious once-upon-a-time farm. ("Headquartered?" I thought. "Where did *that* word come from?") I sat down again, for some inexplicable reason, I was exhausted. But somehow, I vaguely knew where I was. Or let us say, it seemed not to be *unfamiliar* terrain.

Looking down now at my arms and legs and my chest I could see that I was clothed in a greyish-bluish cotton shirt and in dungarees (what-arees? I mused) of a thicker and harsher fabric—not cool, it occurred to me—in any sense. Then I realized I was wearing a black hat, which I immediately

regretted for the hot sun that was starting to beat down and for the flies, which seemed everywhere. My feet were shod (where did that word come from?) with shoes, I guess, of a thin leather and stiff soles. They were brown and looked new. How weird. I pulled the hat off and looked at it. Cool, I thought, I once bought a hat like this in Pasadena. It was black and looked like something David Crosby would have worn. Wait. Who?

I felt my chin and could feel that I had a fairly healthy beard. And I wondered, "Why am I dressed as though it is the 1800s?" So I stood up. No one around that I could see. A hill rose a bit, off to the north I imagined. A scraggly dirt path moved off from the road towards that rise. It was morning and the sun was rising to the right, which meant in the east. So as I looked at this little hill I surmised it was north. It wasn't a large hill, just a rise really. There were pine trees around, but it wasn't what you would call a forest. And the pines were punctuated by scrub-brush, and here and there were a very few more ornamental looking bushes. Magnolia, I imagined? But mostly the landscape was just high grass and what? Weeds, I thought. The air smelled like it was in competition with itself. A breeze brought a sweeter smell, like honeysuckle, or a rich fragranced foliage, that was supposed to be there. But it was mingled with a fainter smell of smoke and, I don't know, worse. Burning maybe. Then I saw it to the side of the road—a half-burned, half-buried blue-uniformed arm protruding above the dirt. It was covered in flies and smelled badly. A single board was jammed into the dirt by it.

It had written on it, “Yankey.” It seemed surreally unlikely to me, and I stared at it. “Why isn’t he buried properly?” I thought to myself. Also, “that isn’t how you spell Yankee, either.”

I walked along the road a short ways, to the west I imagined. Now I was at the edge of another rise which looked down into a tiny village. I could see the small church on the left of the road and in the distance just a couple of buildings. The road seemed to meander down past farm fields and into this village and then, I could barely discern, it merged with another road at an angle, it seemed. At that moment, a loud “whang,” like a gunshot, from the woods and a bullet whizzed past me and buried itself in a pine trunk. A loud and rude, “K’thunk.” I froze, then looked around and a horseman (another weird word in my head) was about 20 yards to my left, rifle in hand and he seemed to be smiling. The horse approached me. “Who are you, stranger?” the horseman called out. I did not know a name to give him.

But I yelled back, “Are you trying to kill me, sir?”

The horseman laughed, “Most assuredly not, sir,” he said. “If I wanted your skull split open like a broken tobacco barrel, so it would be.” He came up to me with the rifle under his left arm but generally aimed at me. I could see it was a Springfield .58-caliber muzzle-loading Civil War piece—the muzzle was smoking menacingly although I knew it was no longer loaded. He was also wearing what I could see to be a Colt Army Model

cap & ball .44-caliber revolver around his waist. The holster snap was unfastened.

“Alright, sir,” he said, “let’s start again. Perhaps it will be easier if I properly introduced myself. I am Babe Butcher and I live back in the woods there. And you are?” Again, I did not produce a name and I was shaking from being shot at.

I just offered, “I am lost, sir. I do not remember my name. I hope that you will not shoot me.”

“Are you Yankee or secesh,” he asked?

“I don’t know,” I blurted. “I mean, sir, I am neither.”

“Well, you have to be one or the other and if you are lost, which you clearly appear to be, I will tell you that you are in Annandale, and that Mosby is near. I suggest you find cover. He was through here early this morning, up to some mischief, apparently.” He gestured at the things lying about. “You do not want to be caught out in the open by him or his men,” Mr. Butcher said.

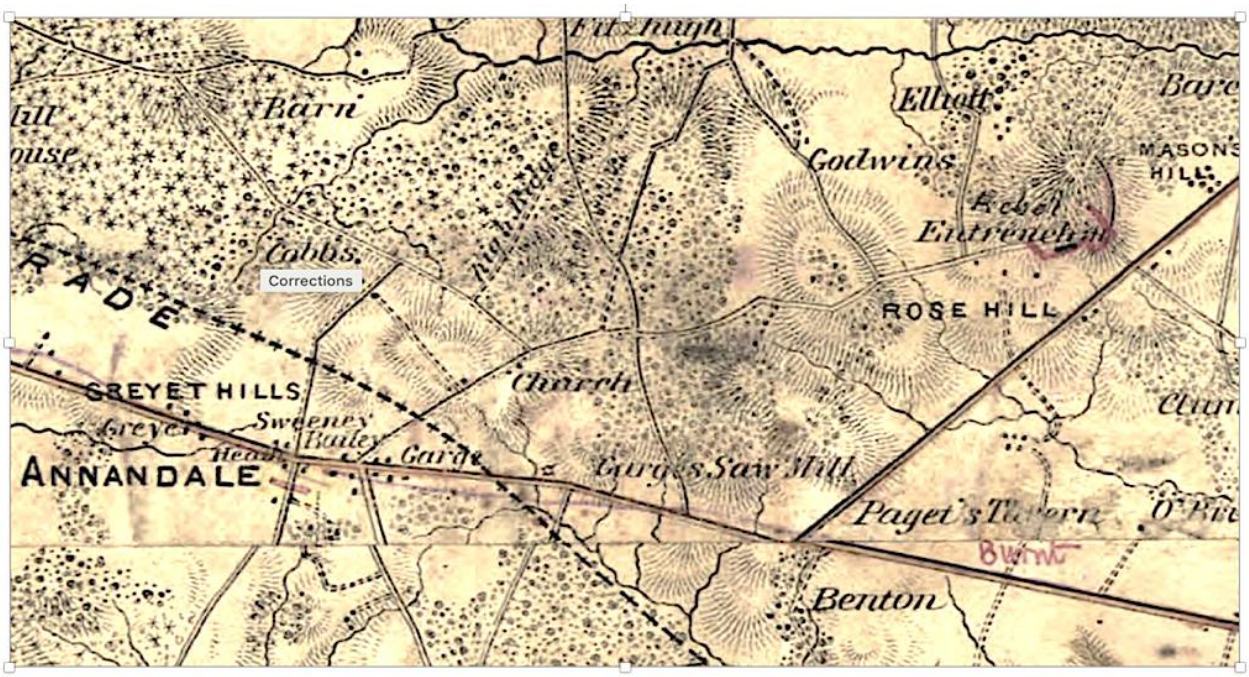
He did not seem to be to be what I thought Union men looked like. And he did not give off the air of what I imagined a Confederate soldier would present, either. I was not sure what to make of my captor. Huh. Funny word again, I thought, and I was feeling a very odd disorientation. I remembered

that I had once worked on a Navy project called “Captor”, the “encapsulated torpedo.” I shook that off…

The man’s horse snuffed like it was telling him something. “Well sir, I must be off. I have an errand at Ossian. If you do not find lodging for tonight, you may find me over yonder, and I will extend what hospitality to you that the Lord has blessed me with. I bid you good-day,” and he trotted off down towards the church.

I stood alone again but thought to call out to him, “Good sir, can you tell me the name of this road?” I shouted. He looked over his shoulder and yelled back, “Columbia Turnpike, sir. And the little rise at which you were staring is called the High Ridge.”

I stood in shock and looked all around again. I could hardly believe what I was seeing. The rise, the steeple, the barn, the distant intersection and the pine trees. I was standing where I grew up, but I was standing there, somehow, in the past. It was then that I felt in my pocket a folded piece of paper. I pulled it out, unfolded it, and saw a map. It was on a paper clearly *not* from this time but much later—looked like photocopy paper. And it had labeled, at a village, “Annandale.”



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I walked down the hill for a few yards, saw the church and its little sign, which read “Methodist-Episcopal Church”. I thought, “Well which is it? Methodist? Or Episcopal?” But somehow it made sense in my head as I stood staring at the little building. There was another small building behind it. That building was somehow very familiar to me. I had even been inside it a time or two with the Scouts when I was young. Scouts? Hmm. I hardly remember that. Now though, the building had a simple, dirty banner by the door. On it was the word “Wounded”. I walked over to the door, which was closed. “A hospital?” I thought. There was also a very small cemetery next to that little building. That also seemed familiar to me. It was now about 10 am.

I pulled the map out of my pocket again, and studied it more closely. Annandale. Sweeney. Greyet Hills. Bailey. Garge. Church. And yes there was "High Ridge." I laughed to myself—there was also a "Rose Hill" farther down the road, in the other direction. Then I saw the notation: *Rebel* ENTRENCHMENTS, past Rose Hill. The word "Rebel" seemed hand-written in. I thought, "I'm here in Annandale IN the Civil War!" That unnerved me. "How can this be? I don't want to be here in the 1860s." Actually, I kind of wished I could have been transported--is that the word?—back into the *19*60s. Then maybe, I would like being back in Annandale...

Farther down the other road (which I surmised to be Little River Turnpike), which we just called "236" back in the day; or forward in the day. There was "burnt" also written by hand next to "Paget's Tavern." Sad. What mean-spirited people would burn a tavern? From that I realized, "Man, I am thirsty." Not having lots of options, I went and knocked on the church door. It was opened by an older woman, who seemed dressed in cleaning clothing. But was that different in those times from other clothes? I did not know. She looked me over, apparently felt sorry for me, and said, "Yes, sir? What can I do for you today?"

"Ma'am I am sorry for bothering you. I am new here, well in a manner, and I am not sure where I am, and I am very thirsty. Can you spare a cup of water??

The woman stared at me hard, then softened her glare to neutral, then smiled. “Yes of course, wait here. I have a water bucket. One moment.” She closed the door with me standing on the step. In a moment it opened and she handed me a large stone cup which I took, looked in, and carefully tasted it. She laughed. “Sir, we do not poison visitors in our church.”

I drained the cup and wiped the drops off my beard. “Oh my, that is good, thank you ma’am” I snorted. My parched throat appreciated every bit.

“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones,” she recited and looked at me, “a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. Matthew 10:42, sir. I am sorry I cannot invite you in to sit, but the preacher is on the, um, over in the field. He will be back directly if you wish to sit there and wait?” She pointed to an old wooden bench, maybe even an old pew on the side of the out-building. I thanked her, and she refilled my cup. “Just leave the cup here on the step. Good day, sir” she said in a friendly way.

“Ma’am, just one question if I may?”

“Of course, sir” she said.

“May I ask, who is ‘Mosby’? A gentleman named Mr. Butcher told me to watch out for him…”

She smiled a bit. “Oh? Mr. Butcher? Yes. Mosby is a Confederate partisan, the commander of them in fact. Some of his troopers were through here this morning. I don’t know if the Captain was with them specifically, or not. It would not perplex me if that plume of smoke over yonder may have something to do with him.” She pointed over the out-building and over beyond the trees. There arose a pillar of smoke, black, almost mechanical smelling. That, and the corpse, were what I had smelled in the breeze. “Now, good day, sir” and she closed the doors. I also noticed the shutters, from the inside, being closed.

I crossed the road, and it seemed like maybe being on the high side would be prudent. I clambered up the hill and lowered myself to one knee. I could see in all directions, well, not through the barn of course, but all around the field, down the road in both directions and over towards the woods where Mr. Butcher said he lived. I thought that with nothing else to do, my thirst assuaged (What? “assuaged?” where did I get that word?). Well, maybe I could just walk around the, what? What do I call it? Ok. I’ll call it what it WILL be for me…walk around the “neighborhood.” So strange…. But it was a sunny day and the sun had not become too hot yet. So I headed toward the top of the rise, that the map called “High Ridge.”

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From up there now, I could see a little further. It was quiet. Field birds flew over occasionally, glimpsing me but unimpressed. I was enchanted to be at the top of what in 85 years would be the crest of Ridge Road in “Columbia Pines.” Nothing was there now. On this crest there were few trees. Just dusty and rocky soil. No “flotsam” here.

I shook my head to wake myself up again, but I was fully awake. A bare path led off down the hill to the east towards what would become Sleepy Hollow Woods. But as I peered over to the West, I imagined the A&P supermarket, my own Annandale Elementary School, the Fire Station, Giant Food, Drug Fair, the bowling alley and farther off to the southwest, Annandale High School.

As I shaded my eyes, which strangely seemed to have excellent vision here, I could just see a very thin wisp of chimney smoke coming out of a property obscured by trees. That must be Ossian Hall, I thought. Maybe Mrs. Lee is there right now! I knew that she and her daughters were forced by the Union army to vacate her home at Arlington, inherited from her great-grandmother, Martha Dandridge Custis Washington—the first President’s wife. And I knew at one point the Lees had taken refuge at Ossian. And didn’t Mr. Butcher say he had an errand at Ossian? Anyway, Arlington Hall now housed Union soldiers, I imagined. This is crazy. I still wasn’t sure what year I had landed into, or why? 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864 or 1865? Well, I was pretty sure it wasn’t ’64 or

’65. There probably would be no “Mosby” this far north, would there? Or, would there be Confederate *anything* here that late in the war? By then all were down south around Richmond.

I walked back down the hill toward the barn. When I was young it belonged to Mr. Webb. He found me in that barn one day looking at his stuff. I remember being afraid because I saw dried blood on the floor. Might have been paint or animal blood. I wonder if the current owner was, or is, Mr. Webb’s ancestor? Well, no one seemed to be around.

I crossed the Columbia Turnpike, such as it was, just at the spot when I remembered-forward—I seem to have invented a new term--to 1971 where I almost had my leg taken off by a road grader when I was working on the highway’s widening. Jim Dobie had pulled me out of the way just in time. Why can I remember his name and not my own? I stopped in the road for a moment. No CAT road graders in sight. Ha! I decided to go over into the woods and see if I could find Mr. Butcher’s home.

I walked across a field—what would later be the church’s parking lot--into a wood and stopped. I could hear hoofbeats. I crouched down at the edge of the trees. Ten horsemen were riding up the Pike towards the church, and I recognized Sharp’s carbines on their backs or in black leather saddle-scabbards. A couple of them wore grey but most had no particular uniform. I watched them and they did not spot me.

They were not shouting and in no particular hurry. I only heard one word, hollered by one of them, “Yankees…”

They pulled up to the church and two dismounted. They went to the out-building door and just opened it. I couldn’t really see much else from where I knelt. But the others were giving their horses a break after what seemed to me to have been a hard ride (although I don’t know why I thought that because I really know nothing about horses.) A few moments and the two riders brought out a wounded man, both arms in heavy bandages. They hoisted him on to a mount, lashed him carefully about the waist to the saddle. His rider then climbed up, made sure the wounded man was secure, then off they went, down into the village and disappeared from my vantage point. I could see the wounded man lean forward against the back of his rider and I was touched by the scene. Then I saw the woman who had given me water come out of the out-building. She wrung out what looked to me from my distance to be bandages. I could barely make out that they were not white. They seemed to be pink.

I sat for a long moment. The sun was beating down now. It was getting hot. Man, this neighborhood was *never* this quiet. But here it sits, unchanged for eons. I stood up, pointed myself into the woods. I remembered that over here was where the Butcher family from my day lived, and the LeCompte family. I walked further into the pine tree woods, stepping over logs, down into a gully that had a tiny stream running through it. And up a small rise, further through the

woods and then a small road appeared. Across, and then I saw a small yard around a fairly large log home, with a stone chimney and a front, well, we called them “farmer’s” porches. It was a front porch with a roof over it. Oddly, there was a nicely crafted wooden cross next to the one door on the porch. I walked over to the house, climbed up the three steps to the door and knocked.

I was only half-surprised when the door was opened by Babe Butcher, my could-have-been executioner from that morning. He looked me over hard, then recognized me and said, “Ah, Mister Mystery, you have stopped by. I am glad. Come in please, come in.”

“Sir,” I said, a little embarrassed, “I really had nowhere else to go. And I must confess that I still do not remember my name.” This was actually *quite* embarrassing. But Mr. Butcher was very gracious, actually—for someone who could have blown my head off, I thought. He brought me into the small, what I would have called a “living” room but I was pretty sure he did not call it that. I sat in a wooden rocking chair, in which I naturally rocked, and he brought me yet another cup of water, which I drained immediately. Then a surprising thing happened. A woman came into the room from the back of the cabin and it was the same woman whom I had met in the church! She smiled broadly at me, and laughed. “Sir,” she said, “Perhaps we can be a little more hospitable to you now. I understand my husband took a shot at you.”

Mr. Butcher grinned widely and said, “This is my wife, young man--Susanna. And as it has not perhaps been clear yet to you”—he motioned to the Springfield, by the door, it’s cartridge box looped over the barrel—“but I am the pastor of the church here and Susanna is my wonderful partner in ministry.” I don’t know what told me to do it, but I stood and bowed to her.

“Ma’am, I wish I had some appropriate gift or courtesy to extend to you for your kindness this morning. But I am afraid I have nothing except this hat and these clothes. Well, I have this map…” which I took out of my pocket and unfolded it for them to view.

“No need for courtesies, young man,” Susanna Butcher said, “it is our sacred calling to serve the sojourner, and this you plainly are. May I ask from where do you come to us, and what is your errand here in our little Annandale?” The older gentleman was carefully looking at the map. He seemed particularly taken with the paper on which it was printed.

I hesitated, and Pastor Butcher looked up from the map, handed it back to me, and waited also for my response.

“Uh, I wish I could give you both more, um, information. I do not know but I can say that all this,” I waved my arm around the area, “is familiar to me. Is it possible that I *am* from here and just cannot remember?”

The pastor sat me back in the rocker, and sat opposite in a straight back, wicker chair. She said, “Let me get some food for us, while you relax, Mr. …, uh, Mr. Mystery,” and both she and the pastor laughed.

He looked at me and I put my gaze to the floor. I tried to change the subject. “Pastor, may I call you that?—before I came through the field and the small woods to your door, I saw a troop of, I suppose they were soldiers? They apparently retrieved a companion from your other building. He looked to have been wounded…”

The Pastor then scowled a severe frown. He was being careful now in what to tell me. I realized then that I might have been a spy of some kind feigning my condition and cluelessness. “Let me ask you, son, do you know what is occurring these days in this little village? Do you know when this is?”

Now I was really embarrassed which he could see. I continued to look at the floor, and scuffed my leather shoe-sole across it. “I do not know, sir. And I am sorry. It seems to me that this might be during the Civil War?”

“Civil War? Interesting interpretation. I have not heard it called that. Our neighbors all around here generally call this conflagration, a war for independence. Those across the River refer to it as the War of Rebellion. Mrs. Butcher and I see ourselves squarely in the middle.”

Susanna called into our conversation from the other room, “And that is proving to be quite the challenge to our faith in the Lord’s providence.” She came back in with a platter of cheese, bread, fresh butter, peach slices and a pewter carafe of something that smelled wonderful, steaming out. She placed the tray on a side table, home cut and carpentered obviously. We were not at Mt. Vernon, I thought.

The Pastor looked at me and said, “We need something to call you, sir, until you recall your true name. May I call you ‘Mr. Ridge’ after the High Ridge you surveyed?”

“As good as any, I suppose,” was my resigned reply and I tried to smile. I had no better name to give them. Susanna motioned me to the side table, which I happily accepted. I took a plate and put a piece of bread, two slices of cheese and two peach slices—man, they looked wonderful! And I poured a cup of the “something”, I guessed it was coffee but it had a richer aroma.

“Mr. Ridge,” the pastor said, like he was trying the name out…”Let me show you something.”

“Certainly,” I said, with a slice of peach hanging out of my mouth a bit. Susanna laughed.

“Yes, Mr. Ridge, it is peach season and they are indeed worthy of praise,” she said.

The Pastor handed me another map, on rough paper, larger than mine. But wait. It was the same map! Then he said, “Mr. Ridge, I drew this map myself last year, of our little environs. I find it curious that you have the same map, my map, though smaller and on this strange paper. How did you come by such a facsimile? If I may inquire.”

Now I forgot the food, or rather, I felt like somehow my hand had been caught in the proverbial cookie jar. Again, for the third time in this visit, I was embarrassed. I stared at the new map, Mr. Butcher’s map. PASTOR Butcher’s map.

“Yes, this is identical. How weird…” was all I could say.

“Please, Mr. Ridge, restrain your crass language,” Susanna said in a quietly scolding way.

“What, what did I say?” I retorted, really not understanding.

“We do not use a word like ‘weird’ sir,” the Pastor said. “It is what the Bible would call ‘coarse language.’”

“I apologize,” I said, but now I was fascinated at the fact that I had been carrying a 21st century photocopy of a map that this very man had drawn, and was now presenting to me. Almost more than I could take…

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Before I could catch myself, I blurted out, “Pastor, I feel like I am from someplace else. I mean, not geographically but in time.”

His eyebrow went up and he said, “I will choose to reserve judgment on that for the moment but continue, young man.”

“I mean, and thank you again for being so kind to me, yes, and your wife’s goodness too” (I didn’t look at her). “But since I woke up on the road, I have felt so in-place, like I know this little town, and also *out*-of-place, sir. I have memories…”

“You have memories, yes?” he said quietly.

Susanna changed the subject. “Mr. Ridge, you say you watched the soldiers at the hospital today? They came back for one of their fellows. He was badly hurt and we cared for him as best we could. But please do not report us to either side. We are attempting in these tumultuous times to remain as Christ would have us to be. But I must say, it is difficult, sir.” I nodded sympathetically.

The Pastor graciously was unoffended at her interruption. He added, “Yes, as Susanna says, we attempt to serve the Kingdom of the Lord. That invites us to help the injured, whatever his uniform. And as you know, these are very troubled times.”

“May I inquire, Pastor, as to exactly what year this is, or perhaps, the date?” I quietly asked.

“Yes of course,” he answered. “Today is the 20th day of August in the year of our Lord, Eighteen hundred and sixty-two, and if I may so say, one can tell at least that it is August,” as he wiped some sweat from his forehead. “And it is a Wednesday, sir.”

“There was another terrible battle perhaps ten days ago, about sixty miles from here, somewhere down near Culpeper,” his wife added. “Wounded soldiers, mostly from the Union army have been straggling back through Annandale since. A few are rather rudely buried about. There are no Union units among us at the moment. And those secesh troopers that you saw had given us charge of one of their companions two days ago until they could return to retrieve him. We did what we could for him. He had shot embedded in both arms. I was able to extract the balls and it was terrible for the young man, but he seemed to rally under the providential grace of our God. They took him off, as you saw this morning.”

“Yes, Ma’am, I said. That was wonderful of you. Both of you,” I offered.

“Those were Mosby’s men. They are still around. They come and go,” commented the Pastor.

“After last year,” Susanna went on—I could tell she did not get to speak openly very often as she might have liked—“the terrible conflict at Bull Run, there were so many Union troops through here. First, they passed by here almost as if in review on their way west. There were so many of them and it was a spectacle. They were accompanied by many, shall I say ‘fancy’ people? In their carriages with parasols and their horses decorated. But then so many terribly wounded returned, to be moved by ambulances or horses or even just dragged on sleds that their companions fashioned… they were certainly not in ‘review’. It was so hard to see.” She looked down. It was hard for her to recall those scenes. Pastor Butcher just grunted in agreement.

But then the Pastor chuckled a bit. “No one, either side, seems to mind me being armed with my Springfield or my Colt. They seem to mostly expect it these days. But there have been so many different Union units coming down the Pike, they do not all know me so I must be careful and very diplomatic.”

Susanna continued. “For a while in the Winter and Spring, things settled down a bit. There were many engagements over in the Valley in the Spring and Summer. General Jackson…” She halted a moment to gauge my reaction. “Well, he kept the Yan… the Federal campaigns over there. But now affairs seemed to have shifted back East, and we fear there is more trouble coming soon. From what we learn, the

engagement from ten days ago was only a foretaste of what is to come. It is all so sad."

"Did you grow up here, Ma'am?" I asked, to try to lighten the moment a bit.

"Oh, No," she answered and smiled. "I was raised in Winchester. Babe was raised here. We were introduced at a Harvest Festival in Marshall. That is, perhaps we could say, half-way between here and Winchester. Fifteen years ago." The Pastor smiled too. I did not inquire as to any children. Not my business.

The evening was getting on. The Pastor's wife presented more cheese and some large slabs of cured bacon, which I hungrily appreciated. They also offered me a large "draught", he called it, of a delicious apple cider. I think it was the most wonderful "draught" I had ever emptied down my throat! The Pastor opened his Bible and read a passage from a Gospel, for evening devotion. Then they showed me a place on the back porch that had a hammock in which I was welcome to settle down for the night. I happily accepted their hospitality. Who knows what tomorrow would bring? And I still could not remember my name. So "Mr. Ridge" would have to do for the moment.

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Days passed and Pastor Babe and Susanna Butcher pleasantly accommodated my needs. I don't mean to make it sound like they had become "all about me." I was not injured or ill although I still suffered from a severe disorientation and they regarded this as worth some mercy. The longer I stayed with the Butchers the more they seemed intrigued at me and wondering who I was? I did not know. So we tarried on…

Several times I rode with the Pastor on his horse—he only owned the one, and so far at least, no soldiers had commandeered "'Ol Dollar"--out on his little circuit around Annandale. First, I was completely inept at any kind of domestic or gardening work, and second it was an unspoken sense that for me to stay home in the proximity of Susanna with the Pastor gone for hours would be a public impropriety. The Pastor introduced me to a few of his parishioners – Mr. and Mrs. Benton, Mrs. Sweeney, Mr. and Mrs. Bailey. A larger family, the Garges family, was close by but did not at all seem to be the church-going types. Mr. Garges owned and ran the sawmill on the Little River Turnpike and despite the war, did not seem to be lacking in work. He had plenty of stock lumber and one customer or another, he said, was always coming with a wagon of logs needing his services.

Once we rode over to Ossian Hall—the place where he was headed on the first day that I met the Pastor. It was a large, stately mansion and on this 1862 day, it was a proud and central place in the greater Annandale area. On the day that I

visited with Pastor Butcher, the home was giving respite to Mrs. Robert E. Lee and her daughter Eleanor. They were there for just a short while before heading south to Liberty (which I knew would later be known as Bedford, Virginia). Mrs. Lee was quite cautious and uninterested in meeting the Pastor's new friend—but she had some colluding news for him. Eleanor, however, was charming, a beautiful 20 year old. While waiting for the Pastor, who was having a quiet but intense looking conversation with Mrs. Lee, Eleanor sat and visited with me in the Ossian foyer. In fact, she gave me a scrap of paper with the beginnings (she said) of a poem she was writing—she also said that shortly she would be accompanying her sister Anne, who had contracted Typhoid fever, to North Carolina.

The lyric ran,

Mary, the Christ long slain, passed silently,
Following her children joyous astir
Under the cedrus and the olive tree,
Pausing to let their laughter float to her—
Each voice an echo of a voice more dear,
She saw a little Christ in every face.

I was enchanted by this warm, haunting young woman, daughter to the famous couple but I could not imagine that if I had wanted to court such a beauty, having to knock on the front door and to be greeted by such as her father. Somehow, I knew she would only live another 12 years and would die at 32 years old. It made me sad, and she sensed this.

"Master Ridge, have I troubled you in some way with my poem?" she asked, truly concerned.

I caught myself, "No, no, ma'am, not at all. It is quite moving" I said, and I smiled but avoided eye contact. At that point, the Pastor was finished with his conversation with Mrs. Lee and we were off from Ossian Hall to points unknown to me. Or rather, would *later* be known by me.

We rode up what I recognized from the terrain to be the future Ravensworth Road. We stopped on the horse a short distance from Ossian Hall and turned the horse back for a final glimpse. I realized then where we were standing. It was the

field in which my future high school would be built. Of course, I said nothing over the shoulder of Pastor Butcher except, “This would be a good place to construct a school, sir.” He snorted and said, “a school would be welcome but not in these times. Soldiers tend to sack and burn such places.”

* * * * *

6

As I awakened the next morning, in my hammock, it was a sweet-smelling, warm morning. I half-wished I could just roll over and sleep the day away. But Mrs. Butcher came out of the back door with a plate of fried eggs, bacon, a wad of freshly baked bread, butter, jam and coffee. There would be no turning over. They had given me a nightshirt of cotton which was actually very appropriate, and she smiled and placed a tray on the old rough-hewn wooden table. She said, “Good morning, Mr. Ridge, I thought you might like some breakfast,” and she quickly withdrew back inside.

Under the plate was a copy of the *Alexandria Gazette* newspaper, with an article about Cedar Mountain and the battle there. Mrs. Butcher wanted me to see it, I assumed, but since it was under the plate I also assumed there was some intrigue in her and the Pastor even possessing it. I read the front page, all the details of the battle. It made my heart sink. I was still adjusting to the idea that I was HERE. NOW. Now is 1862. I did not know if I would make it back to my present

time or not. For now, for some reason, here I was in Annandale in the middle of the Civil War.

I knew from my history that Cedar Mountain was the prelude to a coming and much bigger conflict. I was not going to breathe a word of this to my hosts but when I began to think of that, it made my skin crawl. At that moment, Pastor Butcher came out, pulled up a stool (also rough-hewn wood) and sat down. He had a mug of coffee with him too and sat while I ate the wonderful breakfast.

“So, Mr. Ridge, would you like to ride with me to Fairfax Courthouse today? I will be taking the wagon and will be gone all day,” he asked me and it was more of an itinerary of what he and I *would* be doing on this day and not so much an invitation.

“Yes, Pastor, of course. My schedule is clear,” I answered and smiled. He did not know the idiom about a schedule being clear or see any humor in what I said.

“Uh, yes, of course. I will let you finish your meal, and get yourself otherwise ready and I will prepare the wagon while I wait,” he said.

“I will not be long, sir,” I assured him.

In fifteen minutes, I had finished what was the most wonderful breakfast I think I had ever had, used the

outhouse—a thing I assumed I would not have to ask permission about. I combed my hair as best I could and placed the black "Pasadena" hat on my head and waited by the wagon. Pastor Butcher came out, followed by Susanna, whom he kissed and hugged, and spoke inaudibly (to me) briefly and climbed up next to me on the wagon. "Old Dollar" (I felt like I had heard that name in some movie in the future) was hitched and ready to go. We got settled and he pulled out a small oilcloth and handed it to me. I unwrapped a small derringer and looked at him. He said, "Just place it in your pocket, son, and forget it is there. I trust the Lord will not bring a providential incident such that you might use it. "I assume that you know how to shoot it," to which I nodded in the affirmative. But that was a lying nod.

We then rode through the field, the Pastor halting momentarily to listen for any hoofbeats. We then began the ride down the hill towards the Pike's intersection with the Little River Turnpike. We approached it and it was blocked by a turnstile. We waited until a man came out of a small shack, and raised the turnstile. "No need for that nickel, Pastor, I am sure you are on an errand of the Lord's work."

"Thank you ever so kindly, Giles," said the Pastor and we rode on through.

Down the Little River Turnpike we ambled, no one else in sight on what was a beautiful summer morning. Then the Pastor slowed and stopped the wagon and listened. He angled our

wagon off the road, and into a stand of pine trees and turned around. He said to me, “Shhh,” with which of course, I complied. In a moment there was a loud stampede of horse sounds, and in front of us—we were pretty well concealed—galloped a large troop of Union cavalry. They were accompanied by two small cannon with caissons. Instinctively, I counted as best I could. It was a hundred troopers, in full uniform, most sporting Sharp’s carbines. The lead officer yelled, “Whoa, all stop!” My blood chilled. The Pastor then decided it was best to show ourselves, and he moved our wagon out of the stand of trees into the open. He whispered to me, “They saw the wheel marks—best to play it openly.”

“You, Sir, come over here,” was the command from the officer. Pastor Butcher waved and we moved up to the officer.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” was the Pastor’s greeting. “I am Pastor Butcher, sir, and this is my young assistant, Mr. Ridge.”

“Ah, yes Reverend, I see that you are indeed. Do you not remember me?” asked the officer, more friendly than I expected.

“Yes, Sir, you are Captain Santos, I think. You are Massachusetts troops, yes?” Butcher asked.

“Indeed we are sir, and I can still taste that fine cider your wife quenched my patrol with last week,” and he smiled.

“Please sir, come by the church any time and there is more, if I correctly remember my wife telling me. I will be home this evening if you can visit,” said the Pastor.

“Any secesh about?” he asked. Pastor Butcher looked around, and offered, “There was yesterday, sir, a small patrol. But they went west as we are today and I have seen nothing of them since. Have you, Mr. Ridge?” he asked me. All I could offer was agreement with him. I could see we were playing the diplomatic role.

The captain looked me over. “I have not seen you before, Mr. Ridge, I trust you are not a secesh spy?” Now I was scared. I had read what Union cavalry did with spies. But I played the role.

I laughed just a bit—not so much as to sound sarcastic. “No sir, I am not. I grew up in Annandale but I have been away for a long time. Out west. Now I have come home but all my relatives are gone” (which could hardly be more true since none of them even existed yet--even my Danish grandparents would not be born for another eight years). “The good Pastor has been kind to me and invited me to attend a meeting of ministers in Fairfax today. I have given aspiration to enter the calling, perhaps.”

I don’t know if either the Captain OR the Reverend believed me or not, but the notion worked. “Alright, then off with you.

I will watch your rear as you ride out. We cannot be too careful. I am told Mosby is about. He would be less charitable, I suspect," and he waved us on.

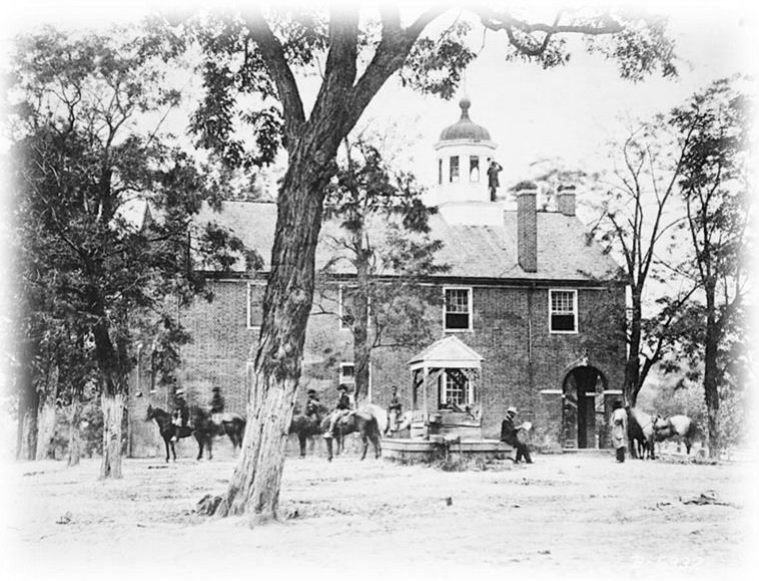
A few of the troopers dismounted and allowed their steeds to rest for a bit. We were right at the place where in 98 years the Capital Beltway would come through. We slowly rolled down a hill and then up a rise. When out of earshot, the Pastor said to me, "Given aspiration to enter the calling, eh?" and he chuckled. "A good line, son, a good line."

"Well, perhaps I yet shall. You have been a good mentor, sir" I said and for the first time today, I relaxed.

* * * * *

7

In another hour we arrived at the yard of the Fairfax Courthouse. Pastor Butcher was indeed "scheduled" to be part of a nearly day-long fellowship of Methodist ministers from the County. It was mid-morning and we climbed off the wagon, tied it to a hitching post and gave the horse



some oats. We stood in the midst of a collection of camp scenes of tents, cooking fires and stacks of muskets. These were Union army squads of soldiers—all looked young--and none seemed too interested in us. I don't know why I was so nervous, and the Pastor did not seem at all nervous. He was known as a minister with a politically neutral stance. Neither he nor they perhaps, would have used that phraseology, but that is how I called him.

As I stood and looked at the Courthouse, I asked the Pastor who had built this structure?

"Oh, that would be James Wren, son," he replied.

"Wren, sir Wren? Would he have been in the line of the famous Sir Christopher Wren of London," I asked. He was the designer of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, I remembered and had visited in the future.

"Indeed, he was" the Pastor said, surprised apparently that someone such as me would even know of such a luminary of English history. "Sir Wren was our James' grandfather. Colonel James was famous through these parts. He was skilled in carpentry and design. He had also owned a tavern in Falls Church. Both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison had victualed there. Although," he sniffed, "I do not believe President Madison victualed there long. He was evading the British at the time. And, I might add…" and I could tell the Pastor was about to reveal something of which he was proud,

“Colonel Wren was a dedicated Methodist. I should think the good Rev. Wesley would have been proud of him.” I just nodded, this time with no guile.

As we stood in the morning heat, under trees, a couple of other ministers approached Pastor Butcher, these men dressed as clergy might be expected to be.

“Salutations, brother Butcher,” one said and the other said the same, “Salutations.”

Butcher responded, “And to you my brothers, you are looking fresh and well cared for—especially you, brother Charles.”

“We arrived last evening and stayed the night in Earp’s Ordinary,” to which he pointed down the street. “The accommodations were more than adequate, even in these times of annexation,” he said with a note of irony but not so much that anyone would take the comment as seditious had they heard him utter it.

Butcher frowned. “Let us be judicious in our public commentary, sir,” and then he smiled. “This is my new friend from Annandale, Mr. Ridge,” and we all shook hands.

“Welcome, Mr. Ridge, and may you be blessed with our fellowship this day. You will meet several others, one from as far away as Winchester,” and he smiled at Pastor Butcher.
“Oh? Is he arriving by train?” asked Butcher.

“No, my brother, rail use by average civilians is greatly curtailed since last July” (to which I knew he was referring to General Johnston’s use of that route with his division from the Shenandoah Valley at the last minute before the first battle at Bull Run.) “He arrived earlier this morning by carriage. He will be along shortly. We will convene with prayer at noon…”

I inquired of my new friend who this long-distance representative might be? He informed me that it was Susanna’s brother, Rev. Smithy Blanchard, one of the most well-respected (Butcher said) clergymen in all of northern Virginia. I just nodded with the smallest bow.

The afternoon passed pleasantly enough, although I noticed that in the proceedings there was a distinct cautionary feel to the language used and the lack of reference to current events. The ministers confined their comments, their preaching and their prayers to the kingdom of God, a thing they seemed to feel was beneath, above and beyond the tribulations of this world.

A late afternoon time of tea (among Methodists, a hold-over perhaps from their British antecedents) was enjoyed, prayers shared and then farewells. There had been about fifteen men present. Pastor Butcher and I climbed up to the seat on his wagon and “Ol’ Dollar” seemed well rested and more than willing to depart. Somehow, he seemed to have had all he needed of the prancy and frisky cavalry stallions around.

We left Fairfax Courthouse around 4 pm for the hour ride back to Annandale. The Pastor was quiet, pensive. I asked, “Was it a good time, Pastor, for you?”

“Yes, yes, son, it was. But I learned some news that concerns me. It isn’t only Mosby around. There are, apparently, two bands of MacNeill’s Rangers about too.”

“I do not understand,” I said. I was unfamiliar with that name either in the present or in the future.

“I am informed that John MacNeill passed through here two days ago. He is a wily partisan cavalryman. He was on his way to Richmond, to re-enlist. He had been captured but escaped. He wages warfare much like Mr. Mosby. The Federals particularly hate him and they call those soldiers ‘bushwhackers.’ They tend to hang them if they capture them” the Pastor explained. “I will feel better within the solace of my little parsonage, back in Annandale. Mrs. Butcher, I trust, will have a good meal for us…”

* * * * *

8

The next few days passed without incident. It remained that I still could not recall my name and that I had no idea how or why I had awakened in the Pike, in the year 1862. But neither the Pastor nor his wife seemed agitated at this gap in my

understanding of myself. I worked as well as I could in the garden for long hours, which Mrs. Butcher especially appreciated. I accompanied the Pastor on a few pastoral visits, sat quietly and just took in the families and individuals to whom he was so clearly important. No one that I had thus far met did *not* like Pastor Babe Butcher. I had become quite fascinated by this incredible experience of northern Virginia culture while at the same time, feeling the tension and slow-burn anxiety of being in a war-zone in 1862.

As details of the Cedar Mountain conflict slowly filtered into the Annandale community, there was a sadness. Some two hundred "secesh" soldiers had died and while it was now coming to be understood as a Confederate victory, the word "victory" in the minds of Annandale people just meant more trouble ahead. I also noted that no one seemed to mention any number of Union deaths at the battle, and I asked the Pastor about that.

"Yes, Mr. Ridge, apparently more Union soldiers were killed than Confederate. But a lost soul is just that, to God. It does not wear a uniform," he said.

The expression "lost soul" got my attention. It triggered a memory of the first little teenage band I was in, well, way in the future. Our name was "The Lost Souls" and we had that name on the bass drum of our drummer with twinkling Christmas lights inside of it. I must have looked spacy to the Pastor who inquired, "Mr. Ridge, are you alright?"

“Yes sir, just fine. I suppose these uncertain times bring me down… I mean, sadden me when I hear of the trouble. Does this war have to go on, Pastor?” I asked, sincerely.

We were shucking corn for supper on the porch and throwing the leaves into a small barrel. “I do not know,” he said. “We all hope it will be short-lived and that somehow all the politicians can figure out a way to reconcile our differences. It has been more than a year now, and there have been some terrible battles. The longer this tribulation continues, the more, shall I say ‘dug in’, people seem to become. It was one thing to argue in the Capital building about slavery and states’ rights and all those things but it is another when our children and brothers and sisters—yes, women have died too—are forfeiting their lives for the issues. Sir, I must confess I foresee no simple resolution to this conflict.”

I nodded. I remembered-forward that new tragedies were yet to occur: Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Vicksburg, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Cold Harbor and on and on were that were yet to come. Many thousands of fine men would die, and many, many more thousands would be terribly wounded, and many of those would die from their condition. “My how these poor people need penicillin and antibiotics and… nurses,” the strange thought came to me. I then “remembered” that I would have a daughter who would give her life to nursing… I could not remember what her name would be.

Then the Pastor stood up, abruptly, a look of serious concern on his face. I stood up, too. And only a moment later, we could hear a large group of cavalry roaring down the Columbia Pike coming from the east. “Advance cavalry brigade, moving west,” said Butcher. He felt no reason to go inside or alert his wife. They had seen this before, but it was still unnerving—more for me than for him. His house was in the woods anyway and not viewable from the Pike. He said to me, “Come with me. I want to know what is happening.” We left our shucking and walked through the pines, across a path—I guess it was a road—and into the field next to the Pike. There were many troopers riding past, cannon, caissons, wagons and flag-bearers. This was a major deployment.

We stood about half-way into the field and three troopers broke off from the column and headed towards us. We stood our ground. As they came up and slowed, “Good morning, Pastor,” said the officer. Their trousers were light blue, and their tunics were navy blue with faded gold piping on the front. The trousers looked new but the tunics were not. “Fourth Massachusetts Cavalry at your service,” he said and smiled.

The Pastor returned the salutation, “Good morning to you as well, Captain Santos,” and said so cheerfully.

“Good morning, Mr. Ridge, I trust you are proving a help to the good Reverend,” the captain said to me.

“Yessir, I am trying. He is a good example,” was all I said.

The captain looked at the column and said, “We are moving, Reverend, towards the front. Something is up, and I do not know what, but I suggest you keep a sharp eye today and for the next few days. Report any ‘reb’ units, and perhaps make no forays out to the flock today.”

“I shall exercise great caution, sir,” was all the Pastor said. This was no time for lengthy conversation.

“We have just watered our steeds at the Run” (I knew he meant the little creek, Holmes Run, in my “neighborhood”) Santos said, “and we are on the move now. Good day, sir,” and he tipped his campaign hat on which I could see had crossed swords, a “4” and a “C” on it.

And they were gone again. It was the 27th of August and this would be a day to remember…

* * * * *

9

The Pastor and I went back to his home. Susanna was on the porch waiting, and naturally wore an expression of worry. “It was Captain Santos’s troopers,” Butcher called out. She nodded and withdrew back into the house.

We sat again on the porch, looking at where the corn-shucks barrel had been, but Susanna had carried it away. So we sat there in silence, thinking. It was not long before a different noise slowly began to moan from the Pike. It was not cavalry—a different, deeper sound. Butcher said to me, “Oh no… c’mon let’s go look again.” I became afraid again. He grabbed his holster and pistol this time, almost unconsciously.

We walked quickly through the pines again and stood just on the edge of trees. At first there was nothing, but soon a small dust-cloud began to move west on the road. Behind it were marching soldiers—many of them—in cadence, not fast but steady. They were led by officers on horseback, of course. We stood and watched, not hidden but not obvious either. “It’s a full Corps, Mr. Ridge” the Pastor said. “As the captain said, something is happening. The sound tells me it is a great many troops—as I say, probably a whole Corps. At least.”

When the first group passed, several hundred, they were followed by an artillery unit. Many cannon, caissons, more supply horse-drawn wagons. Finally there were different

looking wagons. “Those are ambulances,” he said. “Do you know that word, Mr. Ridge? Those are used to move the wounded after a battle.”

I remembered-forward to the Annandale Fire Department, its shiny red and white engines and two ambulances from my earliest memories of youth—still a century away at this point. Their crest would feature a picture of Ossian Hall!

The column kept marching west. There seemed no end to it and in fact, it grew rather monotonous to watch them. If they spotted us under the tree line, they didn’t seem to mind. After all, we were two. They were thousands. So after some time we walked back to the Pastor’s house. No cavalry or foot-soldiers came down the path by their house. They were resolute to get to where they were going in an orderly fashion by way of the Columbia Turnpike. They were not there to forage or to cause mischief. They were on a mission.

I had noticed, for a moment, that two cannon were temporarily posted at the point where it seemed to me my father would construct the two Columbia Pines signs, some ninety years later. The cannon were not readied for combat, just parked for a while. I had sat, down in the future, on those signs as a boy, imagining this very scene.

* * * * *

10

In the evening, the troops were still moving. We had adjusted to the sounds as though it was a weather front passing through. Well, it was. A storm-front.

By firelight and lamp, we had evening devotions. Although my identity remained a complete fog to me, the Pastor and his wife seemed oblivious to that mystery. I was there. I was aware of some of the future and those parts of Annandale that I would be part of in that future. What a strange thing! I spoke of none of that though, as I had become aware that Mrs. Butcher was fond of a phrase, attached occasionally to a few of the neighbors, "touched in the head," a characterization which I desired to avoid. Actually, as she used the expression it sounded more like "teched in the head." I accompanied the Pastor on his daily duties or worked in the garden, brushing down Ol' Dollar or whatever other chores with which I could assist. I slept comfortably enough in the hammock on the back porch. It was summer of course, but some nights it would become nicely cooler. I had learned some of the details of the war, as they had unfolded about Annandale. Skirmishes were common in this first year of war. The citizenry were almost completely Confederate, even this close to Washington City. I learned the names of some of the men who had gone off to fight for the Confederacy, although Pastor Butcher somehow managed to remain largely neutral. One or two had been killed—one, we heard, at Cedar Mountain only recently. That saddened the couple very much.

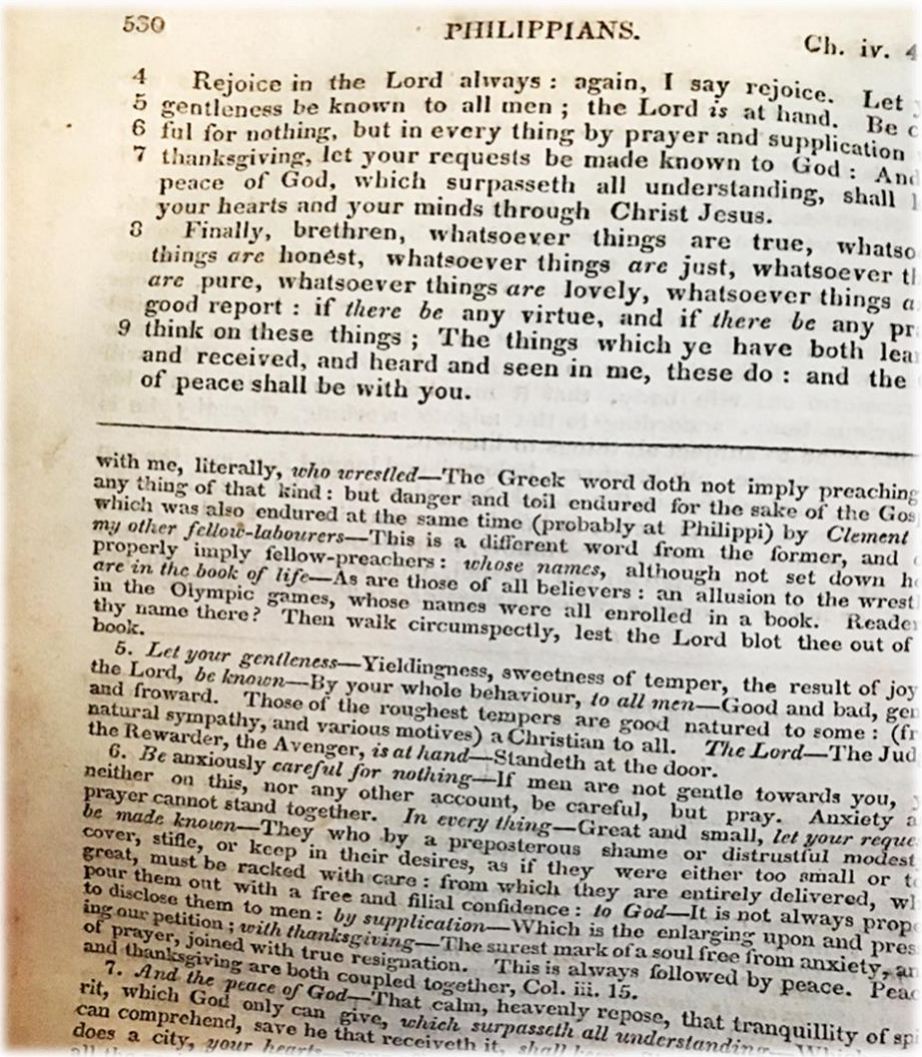
“St. Paul said that we are to ‘Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice’”, the pastor read from a New Testament. (Somehow, I knew what that was.) He read on: “Let your gentleness be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

I sat upright in the wicker chair. “Pastor, shouldn’t that read, Let your ‘moderation’ be known…?” Mrs. Butcher sat more forward now too, I’m sure at my impudence. The Pastor’s eyebrow raised, and then he laughed. “Ah Mr. Ridge, you are a King James man, so it seems!” I was puzzled.

“And you were paying attention, as well. Yes, the old King James version does have it ‘moderation’ but our Mr. Wesley,” he showed me the Wesley New Testament, “found a more apt translation of the Greek word as ‘gentleness.’ We are to demonstrate a gentleness, Mr. Wesley suggests, ‘yieldingness” he says, a ‘sweetness of temper’, see?” and he showed me his Wesley New Testament. I noticed the date: 1818.

Now I laughed too, just a bit. “I defer to Mr. Wesley, sir,” I said, and I thought, Wow I’m talking like them now!

"And the Lord always standeth at the door," Pastor Butcher went on, and I noticed Mrs. Butcher glanced at their door. The evening came to its conclusion and we all retired. I fell asleep thinking about "St. Paul's comments."



530 PHILIPPIANS. Ch. iv. 4

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: again, I say rejoice. Let
5 gentleness be known to all men; the Lord *is* at hand. Be c
6 ful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication
7 thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God: And
peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, shall
your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus.
8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatso
things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever t
are pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things a
good report: if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any pr
9 think on these things; The things which ye have both lea
and received, and heard and seen in me, these do: and the
of peace shall be with you.

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with me, literally, *who wrestled*—The Greek word doth not imply preaching
any thing of that kind: but danger and toil endured for the sake of the Gos
which was also endured at the same time (probably at Philippi) by *Clement*
my other fellow-labourers—This is a different word from the former, and
properly imply fellow-preachers: *whose names*, although not set down h
are in the book of life—As are those of all believers: an allusion to the wrest
in the Olympic games, whose names were all enrolled in a book. Reade
thy name there? Then walk circumspectly, lest the Lord blot thee out of
book.

5. *Let your gentleness*—Yieldingness, sweetness of temper, the result of joy
the Lord, *be known*—By your whole behaviour, *to all men*—Good and bad, ge
and froward. Those of the roughest tempers are good natured to some: (fr
natural sympathy, and various motives) a Christian to all. *The Lord*—The Jud
the Rewarder, the Avenger, *is at hand*—Standeth at the door.

6. *Be* anxiously *careful for nothing*—If men are not gentle towards you,
neither on this, nor any other account, be careful, but pray. Anxiety a
prayer cannot stand together. *In every thing*—Great and small, *let your requ*
be made known—They who by a preposterous shame or distrustful modest
cover, stifle, or keep in their desires, as if they were either too small or t
great, must be racked with care: from which they are entirely delivered, wh
pour them out with a free and filial confidence: *to God*—It is not always prop
to disclose them to men: *by supplication*—Which is the enlarging upon and pres
ing our petition; *with thanksgiving*—The surest mark of a soul free from anxiety, a
of prayer, joined with true resignation. This is always followed by peace. Peac
and thanksgiving are both coupled together, Col. iii. 15.

7. *And the peace of God*—That calm, heavenly repose, that tranquillity of sp
rit, which God only can give, *which surpasseth all understanding*
can comprehend, save he that receiveth it, *shall*
does a city, *your hearts*

As the next three days ground out—I call it "ground out" because we learned of a new great battle in Manassas—many things happened. We were informed that this combat had centered on almost exactly the same location as that of a year earlier! Most striking to me, on the Pike, was the passing of

an ambulance with a woman driving it. It stopped for water at the church and its out-building. Mrs. Butcher attended and spoke with the woman teamster. Her name, I learned, was Miss Clara Barton. She was taking this particular ambulance as presently as she could, back into Washington. It contained two senior Union army officers and two sergeants (by the chevrons on their sleeves—although one was completely torn away, with a blood-soaked bandage on the stump of an arm.) They were severely wounded, but as we say in our times, "in stable condition."

The pastor's wife provided a water bucket—a thing most asked for by battle-wounded, I learned--and some fresh bandages plus a bottle of oil used on wounds sometimes. She also handed the woman a small flask of laudanum. Miss Barton had come through here earlier in the month—I learned from Mrs. Butcher--on her way, she said, to the conflict that would become known as Cedar Mountain. It was some 65 miles away from Annandale, but she had an uncommon determination to get there. She normally lived in Washington City, but after the conflict at the very beginning of the war in Baltimore, she made it her calling to attend to the wounded as often as she could and as close to fighting as she could get herself. It had taken her sometime to acquire permission to do so from the Quartermaster General, as she was a woman and women were not generally given permission to be present at a battle. She appeared to me to be very weary but was affable, looked at me strangely I thought, and gave a few details of the present conflict. It was

terrible, and the Union had once again not fared well. They were withdrawing, at first in order and now much as they had a year earlier. Generals Jackson and Longstreet had won the upper hand, as Miss Barton had heard from these two officers. Apparently once again General McDowell and now General Pope as well had been outfought by the “Greys”. We could expect some confusion and withdrawing units presently and should also be prepared for “secesh” troops as well. Then she rode her ambulance, weaving between other wagons and horse soldiers and small groups of stragglers, on down the Pike.

It was a sad scene, and the pastor and his wife attended to anyone who might need anything that they could provide. The officers who passed all had dark looks on their faces and were generally not up for any conversation. Pastor Butcher knew this and did not press. But enlisted men were more open to talk, and their stress was more open. “We thought we had them whooped at Groveton,” “They took all our stores at Manassas Station,” “The reb bastards hid behind the railroad cut,” were the kinds of things they blurted out when they passed. There was no political talk. In a battle there was just a savage killing, maiming and the raw, open evil of pure rage.

The Columbia Pike was dusty and here and there were small pools of blood. Two soldiers had died as they were driven by ambulance through Annandale. Their sergeant asked or rather insisted to Pastor Butcher that they be quickly interred

in the church's little cemetery. He did not protest and in fact offered to give a few words if the sergeant wished, which he accepted. "Don't make it long, Reb Preacher," the sergeant barked—he was in an ill mood. The unflustered pastor did as he had offered and the soldiers were roughly buried and their comrades stuck two rough wooden crosses over their remains, with names and the date: "Dide: Aug 30, 1862."

Troops were moving through all day and into the evening. Occasionally a cavalry troop would move up the Pike or could be heard in the woods. After dusk, a knock came on the door. It was not wholly dark outside yet, and the Pastor got up and opened it. There stood a local man, dressed as a normal Annandale citizen. "Good evening preacher, could you come please, and your wife?" said the man. He ignored me.

"What is the matter, Charlie," asked the Pastor?

"Jennie is down at the ford of the Run, and our wagon spilt a wheel. She is having our baby! And I did not know where to go…" he was almost shouting.

"Mr. Ridge, get the wagon and Dollar ready please," Butcher said to me and I was off to do so as quickly as I could.

The three of us road over the "High Ridge," and to the left and down a long grade to a stream. One hundred and six years hence, I would know this meadow and its little ford of Holmes Run as "Groove Park", but presently it was just a shallow part

of the stream with a single rail handhold across it. There was the man's wagon, with a fabric cover and within a woman in late labor. Mrs. Butcher climbed up and in, comforted the woman Jennie, and began her ministrations of midwifery. The pastor took the husband down the stream a ways, dipped his canteen into the water, and offered a draught to "Charlie." We sat on a large broken log and waited. In a half an hour or so we heard a baby's cry and Charlie moved to the wagon back, presented by Mrs. Butcher with a freshly daubed and wrapped baby girl. Jennie was very tired but smiling. Mrs. Butcher cared for the afterbirth and cleaned the "delivery room" up as best she could. In another hour or so, after gently placing the new mother and her baby into *our* wagon—Mrs. Butcher said to me, "Let your gentleness be known to all men, the Lord is at hand" and smiled. We rode them to their farm which was two miles (the pastor said) north. We got them settled, and stayed the night. Mrs. Butcher attended Jennie and her baby, whom they named "Susanna", and the men relaxed on the front porch. Charlie provided cigars which he and the pastor greatly enjoyed! I declined.

Towards morning, we were all released to return to the church and the house. As we crossed the High Ridge once again, we smelled smoke. A look of great dread spread over the pastor's and his wife's face. "Oh no," was all he said.

As we rode down what would become Ridge Road, my street in my time, we came out on the Pike. A plume of black smoke was rising from where the church should have been. We rode

to the crest of the Pike, actually right where I had “awakened” just ten days earlier. Susanna sputtered tearfully, “May the Lord have mercy.”

We rode down the hill a ways and saw the still burning church. There remained clumps of soldiers about, sitting and eating provisions. We rode up and one soldier aimed his rifle at the pastor, who was not intimidated although he said nothing.

“So that’s what you get preacher, for helping the rebs,” and he laughed and motioned towards the burning church building. His companions also snorted and one held up a charred Bible. Pastor Babe Butcher maintained a powerful composure. He said nothing, put his arm around a quietly weeping Susanna, and the three of us just sat in the wagon watching the little church finish its combustion.

But at that moment, a cavalry group rode up. It was Captain Santos and companions. He stopped, jumped off his mount and grabbed the soldier up and struck him. The other soldier dropped the still smoking Bible. He said to the trooper angrily, “Soldier, we are not barbarians!” He took out his cavalry revolver, fired a round past the soldier’s ear and into the dirt and continued, “Are we, soldier?”

The others got up, left their haversacks on the ground and moved away. The soldier answered, “This preacher man helped the rebels, sir,” and he scowled at the captain.

“You know this, soldier? Because I know this man and his wife, and his assistant as having been of salient assistance to my soldiers, sir. Nothing but assistance.”

The soldier was unrepentant. “Sir. Mosby and MacNeill have been through here, as I am sure you are aware. These rebs have aided them, I am told.”

“Sir, it is our call to render mercy to whomever comes to our door, saint and scoundrel,” said the pastor. “We do not discriminate, as God has instructed us. We would aid you as well, if you had needed it.”

The captain, in his anger, fired another shot at the feet of the soldier and hollered, “What is your unit?” and then pointed the pistol at the forehead of the slowly softening man.

“Fourteenth New York Infantry, sir. We were routed,” was all he said.

“So, you figured that even though the pastor and his wife have bestowed countless gestures of hospitality on countless of your fellow soldiers—how many are camping on their grounds?—you would reward them by burning their church? Now begone. I shall find you and report your savagery to your commanding officer,” and the soldier got up and ambled down the Pike, joined from the trees by his companions. The smoking Bible remained where it lay.

The captain looked around, surveying the scene on this sad morning. He stood in front of the pastor and wife. He could offer no consoling words, but they detected a sympathy. I was silent but I remembered, right then, a similar scene in a movie in the distant future, where a local sheriff in Russia, after savaging a Jewish wedding party, expressed a similar sympathy to a stunned Jewish father whose name was Tevye. I could not remember the film's name.

"Pastor, I regret this loss. But this is war. Good day, sir," and he mounted his horse, and with his troopers rode off back in the direction of Washington. The pastor, out of his tunic pocket, pulled his folded map. He opened it and said to Susanna and to me, "It will take him all day to get into the city with all this traffic."

Union soldiers, in units or individually, straggled through Annandale for two more days. While they camped all around the burned church, the Pastor's house was untouched although occasionally soldiers came past the house on the little path. Twice, Susanna took water out to them from the well. They were appreciative and having seen the burned church and knowing who she was, they expressed small sympathy before moving on.

I was silent most of this time. There was very little to salvage from the fire but what could be extracted, the pastor and I recovered. The soldiers had not burned the out-building so we placed the few items in there, and made space for a

standing-service inside of that building for the foreseeable future and until new chairs could be procured. It still had the little “Wounded” banner hanging by the door. Maybe that is what saved it. And gradually the Federal encampments dwindled until there were none.

Late in the afternoon on the fourth day after the battle (September 3rd) we were all three sitting on the front porch before supper. A commotion of rustling came from the tree line, towards the field and then out of the trees rode five cavalry in grey. They came up to the porch and we stood.

“Pastor Butcher,” an officer called out.

“I am he, sir,” the Pastor responded.

“I am Captain John Mosby, sir. I am glad to make your acquaintance, and my condolences for your loss of your facility.” He nodded to Mrs. Butcher, “Ma’am,” and peered at me, curiously. “Sir, you look familiar. Have we met?”

“Not that I remember, Captain,” I said. “But it is possible as I was raised here.”

“Very good. Reverend, I beg a single question please. Have you met John MacNeill in these parts of recent?” the captain inquired.

“I had heard that he was through here, before the most recent battle, captain. But we have not seen him personally. I was told that he was making his way to Richmond to re-enlist after his brief incarceration,” the pastor explained.

“Ah yes, incarcerations! Nasty things. I also have just been exchanged, and well, as you can see I am re-horsed,” said Mosby. His fellow troopers laughed. “And a lovely re-horsing, it is, *mon capitaine”* said one and the others laughed again. The steed’s saddle had “U.S.” stamped on it.

“Reverend, I am one to keep things honorable whenever practicable, so allow me to inform you and for whomever you may need to make reference to me, that we have requested of the Confederate government and General Lee, to incorporate,” he looked amusingly at his companions, “as a regular Confederate unit of ‘Rangers.’ I expect this to be approved presently. Mr. MacNeill will do the same, I presume. Perhaps we shall meet again and Good day, sir.” Nodding again to Mrs. Butcher, he said, “Ma’am.” The five troopers hurriedly then rode off towards the “High Ridge” which charmed me, privately.

* * * * *

11

A week after the church fire, on a Sunday morning, Pastor Butcher led a service in the little out-building in the early evening. Charlie and Jennie and their newborn Susanna were

there and Susanna was, I guess it was called “dedicated.” Seventeen people attended, and me—the “ghost of August”, as I had begun to refer to myself. Pastor Butcher said that this new child was a child of the “covenant.” For his morning sermon, he preached a short message. It wasn’t about slavery, of course, and it wasn’t about states’ rights or patriotism or vengeance or any of the local passions for which probably all of the seventeen attenders had strong feelings. It was about the future. It was about a time, he hoped, when little Susanna would reach old age around the middle of the next century. “When sweet little Susanna, in God’s providence, passes nine decades it will be the year nineteen hundred and fifty-two.” He glanced quickly at me and smiled—that would be the year of my birth. He said that he hoped we could foresee and anticipate a better time. He hoped that God’s wisdom and Spirit would be heeded, a time when charity, patience, empathy and a more benign atmosphere would grace Susanna’s little town. His text was from the Gospel of Luke, from which he read, “In your patience possess ye your souls.” He was again using his 1818 Wesley New Testament and he quoted Mr. Wesley’s comment in the Notes: “Be calm and serene, masters of yourselves, and superior to all irrational and disquieting passions. By keeping the government of your spirits, you will both avoid much misery and guard the better against all dangers.” His sermon was all of ten minutes but I was quite struck with it.

In the days that followed, there was another great battle in Maryland, even more terrible than what we had seen of the aftermath from Second Manassas. This clash was near Sharpsburg and the Pastor and his wife would learn of its cost of over 22,000 casualties. The sad flow however, of injured, would not move through Annandale; Sharpsburg lay some 70 miles to the northwest of Washington City. It was a single day of battle but would come to be called the "bloodiest day" in our country's short history. Without anyone saying as much, we were glad to not have it very near to us. Armies moved, jabbed, parried, moved again. It all seemed so tragic. The youth of our young country were being slaughtered by the thousands, and at their own hands.

In October, both Mosby's men or MacNeill's men were occasionally spotted near Annandale. Neither visited Pastor or Mrs. Butcher while I was there. The village people endured a continuing nervousness. Federal columns moved on the Columbia Turnpike and on the Little River Turnpike regularly with little fear. There would be much action yet in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A small Union stockade was erected on the Pike, near to its intersection with the Little River Turnpike. It would in fact, be attacked almost two years later in August 1864 by Mosby's Rangers, with two cannon in support (a "12 pounder and a Napoleon" as Mosby himself would report). But by then the larger armies in Virginia were mostly arrayed around Richmond and Petersburg. And even by that time the war would still have another eight months to endure; then it would spasm its way west for a final, terrible

week in April 1865 before its dramatic conclusion at Appomattox Court House.

Annandale would again become quiet and recede back to its rural sleepiness. Ossian Hall would endure until 1959 when the Annandale Fire Department decided to make it's burning a training exercise. I was seven years old and I was there that day. Man—it was hot! Ravensworth, close to and familially connected to Ossian Hall, had endured only until 1924 when it mysteriously burned (I would spend a week in 1971 on a construction crew, erecting a library on the very site). Arlington would be transformed into the National Cemetery which I would visit several times while a school child. Clara Barton would found the American Red Cross. John S. Mosby would live until 1916 and become perhaps the most objective and nakedly pragmatic former Confederate, reflecting on the folly of slavery and the Civil War, becoming the "wild branch, grafted back in." U.S. Grant liked him, as it happened.

Pastor and Mrs. Butcher remained faithful to their small flock, using the out-building (which would eventually be replaced in 1912 by the one with which I was familiar), or sometimes holding services at their house until a Mr. Walker constructed a new white frame and clapboard church, which took him from 1868 to 1870 to complete.

I had become a part of their family, until one day in the fall, I was walking along the Pike. It was on a Thursday in late November—a day which would later be known as

Thanksgiving, declared such by President Lincoln. I was tired from my hike and I sat down on a log in the same place where I had awakened so strangely, three months previous. I found myself drifting off to sleep in the cool sunshine. When I awoke, I was lying across a sidewalk, now, at the same place, then in a more modern era—that must have looked strange to any motorists on Columbia Pike! I felt young, looked down at my attire and saw that I was a boy again—jeans and Keds. It was something like a century later. I got up, walked over to the entrance to Columbia Pines. I stopped, placed my hand on the cement cap, looked across into the woods. I walked around Ridge Road to my home, where, when I entered the front door, my father immediately said, “There you are! Let’s do our annual Thanksgiving walk!” I agreed, feeling strangely refreshed. We walked back down Ridge Road to the entrance of the neighborhood—he again had to tell me about engineering those Columbia Pines signs at Ft. Belvoir a decade before... We walked across the Pike, across the Methodist Church parking lot, and down a short depression and up again to a path. There sat a ruined house, dark, empty, with a caved in front porch. A piece of an old cross still hung at the door. Dad said, “I wonder who lived here a hundred years ago?”

Columbia Pike today

DEDICATED TO MY GRANDFATHER ROBERT H. PORCH'S UNCLE,
DR. WILLIAM T. PORCH
23 SEPTEMBER 1835 – 28 JULY 1924
COMPANY A 20TH TENNESSEE INFANTRY
PRESENT FOR DUTY AT FIRST MANASSAS,
TENDING THE WOUNDED,
WOUNDED HIMSELF AT SHILOH, RECOVERED, AND SERVED AS A FIELD SURGEON UNTIL APPOMATTOX, WENT TO MEDICAL SCHOOL AFTER THE WAR IN NASHVILLE,
SERVED AS THE TOWN DOCTOR IN BAKERVILLE TN UNTIL 1910 AND
DIED THREE MONTHS AFTER MY MOTHER'S BIRTH
IN WAVERLY, TENNESSEE, THE TOWN OF HER BIRTH

ANNANDALE
OSSIAN HALL
1730
VOL. FIRE DEPT.
8
23
FAIRFAX
COUNTY

High Ridge
Columbia Turnpike

COLUMBIA PINES